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## WERNER BAHNE GEORG JACOBSEN (1909–1995)

Werner Jacobsen, 'Doc' or 'Pop', as he was known to colleagues and family, was born on 6 December 1909 in Berlin, Germany (Figure 3). His schooling was completed at the Humanistisches Gymnasium in Fürstenwalde, Berlin in 1927, where he was taught classical as well as modern languages, mathematics and science. His studies continued at the Universities of Berlin, Graz, Leoben (Austria) and Munich, wherever the most renowned professors in their respective fields were tutoring at the time. He majored in Botany, Geology and Chemistry in 1931. Unable to find employment in the botanical field, which was his first love, he chose a career in geology.

In 1932 his father, an architect, emigrated to South Africa in search of greener pastures and settled in Cape Town where he designed and constructed houses. Here Werner was at home among the mountains which reminded him of the Alps in which he had hiked and climbed during his student years, and he collected some 1 000 specimens of plants for his private herbarium. He obtained employment with the Anglo-American Corporation as Assistant Geologist from 1932–1938. He was part of the team which was instrumental in the discovery of the Western Reefs Mine in the North-West (western Transvaal). Subsequent to his marriage to Beatrice Cutts in 1936 he was seconded to the so-called Bancroft Circus for a year, prospecting in what was then Nyasaland (Malawi), where he was nearly killed by a wounded buffalo. Werner, accompanied by his family which by now included a son, Jens, returned to Germany in 1939 to write up his doctoral thesis on the geology of the Ventersdorp System entitled 'Tektonik und Lithogenese der Venters-

dorp Formation im Klerksdorp—Wolmaransstad Distrikt des südwestlichen Transvaal und im nordwestlichen Oranje-Freistaat', obtaining his degree with distinction.



FIGURE 3.—Werner Bahne Georg Jacobsen (1909–1995).



Unfortunately his timing placed him in the path of the oncoming conflict of the Second World War and he was drafted into service spending most of the war years working for the Reichsamt für Bodenforschung in Norway, in the Balkans and in Russia. After the retreat of German forces from Russia he surrendered to the American forces on crossing the Elbe River into what became known as West Germany. As a prisoner of war his linguistic ability led to his appointment as interpreter to the Allied Forces.

In 1949 he returned to South Africa to rejoin his family which now included a second son, Niels. They had managed to return to South Africa the year before. Here he worked as a consultant geologist until 1955, when he joined the Messina Transvaal Development Corporation and moved to Mangula (now Mhangura) in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). He was resident geologist on the local mine for the next 15 years. During this time he was able to indulge his first love, studying the plants of copper-rich anomalies. This activity resulted in three papers on the subject (Jacobsen 1968a, b, 1970). At the same time he made a collection of the flora of the area which resulted in another publication (Jacobsen 1973).

In 1970 he moved back to South Africa, working from the headquarters of the Messina Corporation in Johannesburg, visiting prospective claims in Namibia and Natal as well as Zimbabwe until his retirement at the age of 68. Throughout this time he collected ferns wherever he went, particularly during holidays when he could visit specific fern-rich areas, which resulted in a paper on the subject (Jacobsen 1978). His retirement meant that he was now free to fulfil his ideal of working on plants, and on ferns in particular. He attempted to obtain a post at the then Botanical Research Institute but, much to his disappointment, he was unsuccessful due to a lack of funds. He now concentrated his efforts on writing a book on the southern African ferns, of which he had collected many specimens during his working years. At the same time he also had the collection of the National Herbarium at his disposal. This work resulted in the *Ferns and fern allies of southern Africa* (1983) which was the first treatise on this subject since T.R. Sim's (1914), *Ferns of South Africa*. This was followed by several publications on the taxonomy and distribution of ferns (Jacobsen 1991; Jacobsen & Jacobsen 1985, 1986, 1988a, b, 1989).

During his later years, his health was gradually eroding his ability to move about. This resulted in 'Pop' spending most of his time working at his desk on geographical and other aspects, including the growth of human populations, shipwrecks around the South African coast, mythological and clerical figures and a host of other topics. His knowledge of Greek and Latin made it possible for him to compile a 600 page manuscript (unpublished) on the derivations of plant names of the flora of Namibia. His general and scientific knowledge was exceptional. He was always

the perfect gentleman, a patient teacher to his sons and to all who worked with him, in many instances encouraging his staff to further their studies. He was loved and respected by all his colleagues. During his retirement he also presented a series of lectures on ferns to the Witwatersrand University Botany honours class, and he wrote articles on ferns in the newsletters of the SWA Scientific Society.

Although specialising in ferns in his later years, 'Pop' collected about 4 500 plant specimens, mostly from Zimbabwe and South Africa but also from Mozambique, which are deposited in the National Herbarium, Zimbabwe, the National Herbarium, Pretoria and the Senckenberg Herbarium, Germany. The 1 000 specimens collected in the Cape in 1932 were destroyed by fire in Germany during the war.

'Pop' died in his sleep in a Pretoria hospital after a short illness on the morning of the 24th October 1995.

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